

# *Pursuing God*

## In Step with the Psalms

### Lesson 7: Psalm 8

## God's Glory—Our Potential

### *Stay on the Path ~*

Seeing life—*your life*—from God's perspective is not only exciting and liberating, it is also the key to motivating you to live at full potential. Since God loves unreservedly, He also wants the very best for all of His children. So why is it that we, on the other hand, become short-sighted and settle for mediocrity when we should aim for excellence? Psalm 8 addresses two very pressing questions for believers: (1) Who is God? (2) What does He think about human beings? Understanding the answers can make all the difference in our drive to reach our full potential and in our desire to know Him even as we are known.

King David is perhaps best known for his heroic defeat of the giant Goliath, a story that might be considered a tall tale were it not for the fact that David became a living legend. 1 Samuel 17 depicts a graphic portrayal of one of the most exciting and often told stories of the Old Testament. In it, this Philistine giant of a man clad in a bronze helmet and body armor daily stood on one side of the Valley of Elah taunting the Israelites encamped on the other side. There he would be, hour after hour, shouting blasphemies and challenging the Israelites across the valley floor to step forward and engage him in combat. David arrived fresh from the sheepfold, astonished that there was not a single soldier in all of Israel brave enough to take on this outrageous enemy and silence him. Understandably, in everyone's eyes the giant was far too big to take on; in David's eyes, he was too big a target to miss! So take down Goliath David did, with just a small sling and a single stone; and thus, a legend was born. From that day on, David was assigned to the court of King Saul. He became chief court musician, composing and playing his songs on the harp to soothe the mad king during his often repeated dark moods.

It is believed by scholars to be around this time that David composed Psalm 8 (later adding a footnote when the music was arranged for temple worship). The footnote contained in the Hebrew text used the word *Muthlabben*: "*To the Chief Musician upon Muthlabben.*" It is an expression that means, "the death of the champion." The Hebrew word for *champion* in 1 Samuel 17:4 is translated: *the man of the space between the camps*. It is a direct reference to the story of David and Goliath. This dramatic story's impact leaves the reader to imagine the power of this psalm on the human soul as its melody and words were repeatedly sung.

### *Did you know ~*

Some passages in the Book of Psalms are prophetic, anticipating the coming of the Messiah. Some were fulfilled in the life of Christ's life as seen throughout the New Testament. Still others point to His impending return. Psalm 8 is noted by scholars as one of the principle Messianic psalms in the collection (Hebrews 2).

## Psalm 8

To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath.  
A Psalm of David.

1 O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth,  
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!

2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants  
You have ordained strength,  
Because of Your enemies,  
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I consider Your heavens,  
the work of Your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

4 What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?

5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,  
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have made him to have dominion  
over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet,

7 All sheep and oxen—even the beasts of the field,

8 The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea  
That pass through the paths of the seas.

9 O Lord, our Lord,  
How excellent is Your name in all the earth!

Scripture from the New King James Bible, ©1980 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

**Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.**

**Read Psalm 8.**

## *Listen to the psalm ~ First impressions*

What is the *tone* of Psalm 8? What stands out to you from your initial reading?

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What can you do to direct your heart toward praising God on a regular basis?

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## *Put a psalm in your heart ~ (Memory verse) Psalm 8:3–4 (NIV)*

(Write out the verse in the spaces below. Practice it each time you open your lesson.)

*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you  
have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him?*

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## *Learn the lessons of the psalm ~*

*Selah* (Think about):

Psalm 8 expresses our faith as seen in the wonders of creation. The beginning and concluding verses of this psalm celebrate the excellence of God visible in the splendor of our vast universe. Encased in the middle we see the wonder of human beings—the focus and purpose of God’s handiwork.

David begins the first three verses of this beautiful psalm with adoration to the Lord, expressing his praise a thousand years before Jesus was born upon the earth. With our Biblical understanding of Jesus, how much more fully can we worship God’s excellence as we see His character revealed in the face of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15).

### *I. All glory and honor belong to God ~*

The excellence of God far surpasses even that which His creation can reveal. David begins the psalm with a declaration of God’s greatness: “*Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!*” The word *excellent*—*majestic*—refers to the splendor of God’s character as it is revealed in His created world.

1. Does God’s visible creation in the world around you move you to praise Him? Name some examples where you see God’s majesty in nature, stirring you to praise.
2. Because the Creator is forever greater than His creation, His glory far exceeds the visible limitations of earth and heaven. What does David say about God’s glory? v. 1

## *Pause & ponder ~*

The twin words *Lord*. . . *Lord* (v. 1) are God’s proper name of *Yahweh* (YHWH), encompassing all of His attributes into one “glorious and awesome name” (Deuteronomy 28:58): THE LORD YOUR GOD. The Hebrew word *Yehovah* is the most frequently used name for God in Scripture (used 5,321 times in the Hebrew Bible). It is a name considered so holy that it was never allowed to be pronounced aloud. It refers to God as the eternal, immutable, self-existent One. The word *Adonai* was inserted in its place in Scripture readings as a reverent way of openly addressing God out loud. The word *adonai* means “master” or “lord.” This is the name God used to instruct Moses from the burning bush when He said: “I AM WHO I AM.” Imagine holding God’s name in such reverence you could not even utter it from your lips! How does this kind of reverential awe influence you in your worship of God? Do you give Him the glory He is due?

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## II. *A right understanding of God's true nature leads to a right understanding of the dignity of man.*

In verse 2, David reflects on the fact that God uses the smallest and weakest of human beings to silence His enemies—babes and nursing infants. Think about it: children and tiny infants have no knowledge or understanding about who God is or how to praise Him. The most they can say or demonstrate in their own way is: “I love you.” But the innocent act of praise from the weakest of human beings heard in heaven overpowers the loud voices of the Lord’s enemies on earth!

David goes on to consider that even a full-grown adult seems terribly insignificant in comparison to the majesty of God’s heavenly creation: *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him* (vv. 3–4)?

### *Touchpoint ~*

One aspect of God’s greatness is evident in the fact that He cares for His creation. How does it make you feel to know that God cares more for the souls of people than He does for the stars and planets of the universe?

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And because God cares about *you*, He visits you (v. 4). Share one of the ways God has recently manifested His loving care toward you.

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1. David marveled at the dignity God assigned to man; what declaration does he make about our significance? v. 5
2. God gave mankind dominion over His earthly creation. List those specific areas that He assigned to our care. vv. 6–8

Putting your understanding of God into a right perspective also leads to a proper realization of your dignity in His eyes. You are below God but above everything else He created. He made you a little lower than the angels, yet crowned you with glory and honor. Such knowledge is too glorious! *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!*

3. Personal: Do you think possessing the proper understanding of your Creator’s estimation of you will help you when you are prone to *wander*. . . to instead be someone who is prone to *wonder*? Please share your thoughts below.

## *Live the psalm ~*

You have learned from Psalm 8 that the Lord *your* God not only created you, He crowns you, companions with you, and also commissions you to do His will. What have you discovered about God's purpose for your life?

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## *Pray the psalm ~*

Are you using His glory to reach your full potential? If not, get serious today; make it your aim to please Him. Select one of the verses from Psalm 8 to pray back to God, asking Him to enable you to live by and for His glory.

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“When read only occasionally, these prayers are too overwhelming in design and power and tend to turn us back to more palatable fare. But whoever has begun to pray the Psalter seriously and regularly will soon give a vacation to other little devotional prayers and say: ‘Ah, there is not the juice, the strength, the passion, the fire which I find in the Psalter . . .’”

Martin Luther



